



RAILWAYS

Thinking about a career in the high-tech field? Then, why not think about Canada's world-class railway industry.

While Canada's railways were the engine of the first industrial revolution, railways continue to play a vital role in the country's economic prosperity into the 21st century. When you're sitting in your car waiting for a train to pass at a level crossing, it may look much as it did 50 years ago, but nothing could be further from the truth! Aside from the space between the rails, nothing is the same.

Canada's rail industry is innovative and has been in the forefront of research, development and the introduction of new technology. From the motive power revolution that came with the conversion from steam to diesel power, to the introduction of computers and the innovative use of modern communications using satellite and fibre optic technology, today's railways are technologically advanced and require a highly-trained, well-educated workforce.

There are a wide range of skills needed to operate a safe, effective and efficient rail system that require post-secondary education at either the university or community college level.

Today, there are approximately 41,000 Canadians working on the country's railways. Over the next 5-10

years, it is expected that 30-50 per cent of the workforce will retire. The Institute of Railway Technology (IRT) (www.irtcanada.net) is an industry-driven initiative established to ensure that there will be a supply of high calibre, highly-skilled technical people to continue the growth and innovation of the industry.

The IRT has established partnerships with several educational institutions across Canada to deliver training that reflects the fast-paced, technologically-advanced world of railway operations.

The railways are key to Canada's success as a trading nation. At 46,000 kilometres of track, the Canadian rail network is one of the largest in the world. In 2000, the industry handled 322 billion revenue tonne-kilometres of freight and earned \$7.2 billion from freight revenue and \$323 million from passenger traffic.

The industry is structured with two large transcontinental freight railways, Canadian National Railways and Canadian Pacific Railway, and a network of approximately 40 smaller regional railways, generally known as "short lines". The short lines work in close collaboration with the transcontinental railways to provide rail service to many industries, particularly in rural communities across Canada. Short line and regional railways now originate about one-third of all rail tonnage each year.

In addition to these freight railways, VIA Rail Canada Inc., created in 1977, provides passenger service to more than 450 communities from coast to coast. In 2000, VIA and the Canadian government announced a \$402-million 5-year investment program to renew equipment, rail infrastructure and stations throughout. This has included the purchase of 21 new high-speed locomotives and 139 new passenger cars which will allow VIA to improve its service across the country.

The U.S. passenger carrier, Amtrak, also provides service between major centres in Canada and the U.S. Ontario Northland, BC Rail, Rocky Mountaineer, Algoma Central Railway, and Canadian Pacific Railway also offer intercity and excursion services. Many travellers are international tourists who come to view the spectacular scenery.

Commuter railways also play an important role in Canada's major cities, i.e., Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, and Vancouver. These commuter operators provide an environmentally-friendly alternative to motor vehicle use in urban areas where road congestion and air pollution are becoming major problems. In 2000, commuter railways in Canada handled nearly 47 million riders and intercity railways carried 4 million passengers.

The rail industry is one that provides career opportunities that truly move a nation!

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